

**Security Council**

Distr.: General

24 April 2014

Original: English

**Nineteenth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General
to the Security Council on the implementation of
Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)****I. Background**

1. The present report is my nineteenth semi-annual report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It provides a review and assessment of the process of the implementation of the resolution since my previous report on the subject was issued on 16 October 2013 (S/2013/612). I note herein the continued lack of progress on key provisions of the resolution, in addition to highlighting increasing concerns threatening the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon, including challenges to efforts to uphold that country's policy of disassociation from the Syrian crisis. I also note positive developments on the political front.
2. There were serious security challenges to stability in Lebanon and further political polarization during the reporting period. In response to acts of terrorism during the period, the Security Council issued seven press statements, on 19 November (SC/11180), 27 December (SC/11232), 2 January (SC/11239), 16 January (SC/11249), 21 January (SC/11256), 1 February (SC/11269) and 19 February (SC/11287), in which Council members appealed to all Lebanese citizens to preserve national unity in the face of attempts to undermine the country's stability and stressed that it was important for all Lebanese parties to respect the country's policy of disassociation and to refrain from any involvement in the Syrian crisis, consistent with their commitment in the Baabda Declaration.
3. Lebanon witnessed many terrorist incidents during the reporting period, leading to at least 65 fatalities and more than 400 injuries. Incendiary explosive devices and car bombs had a significant impact on security and stability in many parts of the country. On 27 December, a former minister, Mohamad Chatah, was assassinated in a car bombing that also killed five other people. There were three suicide bombings in the area of Hermel, three in the eastern Bekaa, four in Beirut and one in Choueifat, north of Beirut, as well as two targeting Lebanese Armed Forces checkpoints in Sidon, all of which led to further loss of life and many injuries.
4. The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to have an impact on the security and stability of Lebanon. There were at least five attacks by the Syrian air force on the area around the Lebanese town of Aarsal, close to the Syrian-Lebanese border. There was also at least one air strike on the northern area of Wadi Khalid,



reportedly leading to the death of at least two Lebanese citizens. Cross-border shooting, shelling and rocket attacks from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon continued to cause death, injury and material damage. The President of Lebanon, Michel Sleiman, maintained his calls for all Lebanese parties to disassociate themselves from the war in the Syrian Arab Republic and to respect their commitment to the principles of the Baabda Declaration.

5. There were positive developments on the political front during the reporting period. For example, on 15 February, after extensive consultations across the political spectrum, the Prime Minister, Tammam Salam, succeeded in forming a 24-member national interest government. The Government won Parliament's vote of confidence on 20 March, with 96 of 128 parliamentarians giving their support. In the Government's ministerial statement, it committed itself to, among other things, preserving the sovereignty and improving the security of Lebanon, respecting Security Council resolutions, supporting the National Dialogue, including resuming discussions concerning the national defence strategy and implementation of decisions taken at earlier sessions, building the capabilities of the armed forces, including by expediting a \$3 billion donation from Saudi Arabia, and following up on decisions agreed upon in the context of the International Support Group for Lebanon. The Government stressed the need to approve a new electoral law for parliamentary elections and committed itself to holding the presidential election on time and on the basis of constitutional procedures and democratic practice.

6. Lebanon, the smallest and most vulnerable of the countries neighbouring the Syrian Arab Republic, continues to host the largest number of Syrian refugees and is facing significant humanitarian and socioeconomic challenges as a consequence. In its ministerial statement, the Government underlined its commitment to addressing practically the humanitarian challenges arising from the presence of 1 million registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon who had fled the violence in their country, through the activation of assistance programmes through the multi-donor trust fund established by the World Bank and other mechanisms. There was also a further influx into Lebanon of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period. Lebanon and its people deserve the highest praise for the way in which they have maintained an open door to refugees fleeing the violence in the Syrian Arab Republic. The United Nations and the Government of Lebanon have continued to work closely together to raise funds to help Lebanon to respond to the humanitarian crisis.

II. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

7. Since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004) on 2 September 2004, several of its provisions have been implemented, as highlighted in my previous reports. Presidential and parliamentary elections have been held in a free and fair manner. The Syrian Arab Republic withdrew its troops and military assets from Lebanon in April 2005. Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic established full diplomatic relations in 2009.

8. During the reporting period, the President and the Prime Minister of Lebanon continued to affirm the country's respect for all United Nations resolutions. The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and its corresponding impact on Lebanon, however, continued to limit progress in the implementation of the outstanding provisions of resolution 1559 (2004) and other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.

9. On 15 February, I warmly welcomed the formation of a new government in Lebanon and have been encouraged since by the Government's commitment to implementing Security Council resolutions, including, specifically, with regard to priority concerns that are directly relevant to resolution 1559 (2004), such as the need to improve security, secure the borders and to implement decisions taken at previous National Dialogue sessions, as detailed in the ministerial statement of 20 March. Nonetheless, the continued rise in violence that characterized the reporting period made progress on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) still more difficult, although more necessary than ever.

10. The delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border, which was strongly encouraged by the Security Council in its resolution 1680 (2006), has still not taken place. Moreover, the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias along the border continue to pose a threat to the stability of the country and the region, highlighting the need for the Government and the armed forces to step up their efforts to reach a full monopoly on the possession of weapons and the use of force throughout Lebanon.

11. My representatives and I remained in regular contact with all parties in Lebanon during the reporting period, as well as with relevant regional and international leaders. I spoke to the President and the Prime Minister on 15 February to congratulate them on the formation of the Government and met the former caretaker Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, in Kuwait on 15 January on the occasion of the Second International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria, hosted by the Government of Kuwait. The Government of Lebanon has highlighted its commitment to tackling urgent issues relating to Syrian refugees and the need for the international community to provide assistance in response to the appeal launched in Kuwait in January. The President of France, François Hollande, and his Government hosted a meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon on 5 March in Paris, attended by the President of Lebanon. Participants stressed that there was a continuing need for strong and coordinated international support for Lebanon to help it to withstand the multiple challenges to its security and stability and reiterated the importance of further strengthening the capabilities of the armed forces. They also thanked the President of Lebanon for his leadership in seeking to uphold the country's sovereignty, unity and stability, in addition to stressing the importance of commitment to the policy of disassociation in an effort to promote dialogue and safeguard Lebanon from the impact of the Syrian crisis.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

12. Resolution 1559 (2004) aims at strengthening the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country, in line with the Taif Agreement of 1989, to which all the political parties in Lebanon committed themselves. This objective has remained the highest priority of my efforts to facilitate the implementation of all resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.

13. In its resolution 1680 (2006), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request by the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border. I continue to call upon

the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon to achieve the full delineation of their common border. Given the continuing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, however, progress has been even more difficult to achieve and no tangible steps were taken by either side in this regard during the reporting period.

14. The delineation and demarcation of the boundaries of Lebanon remain elements essential to guaranteeing national sovereignty and territorial integrity. They also remain critical to facilitating proper border control. The complex security situation along the Syrian-Lebanese border in the current circumstances, including continuing reports of cross-border fighting and movement of arms and people, further underlines the continued urgency of demarcating the border. While acknowledging the bilateral nature of border delineation, progress on this matter remains an obligation of the two countries under resolution 1680 (2006), derived from resolution 1559 (2004).

15. During the reporting period, cross-border shelling, shooting incidents and rocket attacks continued to occur almost daily, causing at least 12 fatalities and tens of injuries. The areas and towns of Aarsal, Labwah, Britel, Nabi Uthman and Wadi Khalid were all frequently subject to such attacks. On 17 January, rockets struck the eastern border town of Aarsal, killing seven people and injuring seven others. In a series of air raids by the Syrian air force on 3 and 16 March, at least 20 missiles hit Aarsal and the surrounding area, causing at least five deaths, tens of injuries and material damage. The Lebanese authorities have consistently highlighted the need to defend Lebanon from such attacks and on 30 December the armed forces responded by firing back at Syrian aircraft in Lebanese airspace.

16. The Bekaa continued to suffer from the impact of the fighting in the neighbouring Syrian region of Qalamon. Several hundred Syrian families arrived in Aarsal fleeing fighting in the Syrian town of Yabrud, with reports of many more stranded in the border area. There were further strikes by Syrian government aircraft on and around Aarsal between 16 and 20 March, with tens of rockets also fired at predominantly Shia towns in the Bekaa, including Hermel and Labwah. The Lebanese army and security forces intensified their deployment in this area, contributing to restoring relative calm. There was a further influx of refugees into the northern Akkar area of Lebanon, in addition to shelling, coinciding with fighting on the Syrian side of the border.

17. The continued occupation by the Israel Defense Forces of the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line stands in violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). My representatives and I continue to engage closely with both parties with a view to facilitating the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the area in implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

18. There was no progress in relation to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area during the reporting period. Neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel has yet responded with regard to the provisional definition of the area contained in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), issued on 30 October 2007 (S/2007/641).

19. Unmanned aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, of the Israeli armed forces continued to make almost daily overflights of Lebanon during the reporting period, in violation of Lebanese sovereignty and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). The Government of Lebanon has repeatedly protested

against the violations. I have deplored them and demanded that they cease immediately. The Israeli authorities, in turn, claim that the overflights are carried out for security reasons.

B. Extension of control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory

20. The Government of Lebanon has reiterated to the United Nations its intention to extend State authority over all Lebanese territory, as called for in the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). The armed forces and internal security forces have played a crucial role in implementing this commitment under difficult circumstances. The ability of the Lebanese State to fully exercise its authority over all its territory continues to be challenged, however. I welcome the Government's commitment to building the capabilities of the army and security forces and stress the need for continued international support to be provided to the authorities and the armed forces.

21. During the reporting period, several incidents challenged national security, most of which were linked directly or indirectly to the war in the Syrian Arab Republic, which has exacerbated sectarian tensions in Lebanon. Concern continued about the involvement of Lebanese fighters in the Syrian Arab Republic, notably those of Hizbullah. Hizbullah publicly acknowledged its continued involvement in that fighting and held funerals for its fighters killed in the Syrian Arab Republic. Its Secretary-General also reaffirmed the party's position on the fighting, including in a speech on 29 March and an interview on 7 April. In addition to the commitment made by the Government of Lebanon in its ministerial statement, the President continued to call upon all parties to adhere to the policy of disassociation agreed upon in the Baabda Declaration during the National Dialogue session of June 2012.

22. During the reporting period, there were violent incidents, terrorist attacks and a political assassination in Lebanon. On 19 November, a double suicide bombing in the Bir al-Abed neighbourhood of Beirut targeted the Iranian Embassy, killing at least 23 people and injuring at least 140 others. There were two attacks on Lebanese army checkpoints in Sidon, killing a soldier and five of the alleged attackers. On 17 December, a car bomb exploded in the Bekaa near an area that was allegedly the site of a Hizbullah training camp, reportedly causing two casualties. On 27 December, a former minister, Mohamad Chatah, who had been a senior adviser to the former Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, was assassinated in downtown Beirut by a car bomb, which also left five others dead. On 2 January, a suicide bombing in the Haret Hreik suburb of Beirut killed 5 people and injured 77 others. In the Bekaa town of Hermel, a car bomb killed 3 people and injured 26 others on 16 January. A suicide bombing on 21 January in Haret Hreik killed 4 people and injured 35 others. On 1 February, a suicide bomber detonated a car in Hermel, causing three fatalities, while on 3 February a suicide bomb attack killed the suicide bomber and injured two others. On 19 February, twin suicide bombs exploded in the Beirut area of Bir Hassan, killing 6 people and injuring more than 100 others. A suicide car bomb exploded at a Lebanese army checkpoint on 22 February, killing 4 people, including 2 Lebanese soldiers, and injuring 15 others. On 16 March, a suicide car bomb exploded in the town of Nabi Uthman in the Bekaa, killing 4 people and injuring more than 10 others. On 29 March, three Lebanese soldiers were killed and four wounded in a suicide car bomb attack at an armed forces checkpoint close to the

eastern town of Aarsal. The Abdullah Azzam Brigades and other extremist groups such as the Nusrah Front and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant claimed responsibility for some of the attacks, alleging that they were in response to the continued involvement of Hizbullah in the fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic.

23. There were further outbreaks of sustained violence in the northern city of Tripoli, between the mainly Sunni residents of Bab al-Tabbannah and the predominantly Alawite community of Jebel Mohsen. Clashes that began on 30 November led to 12 deaths, including that of a Lebanese soldier, and at least 70 injuries. Violence between the same communities in January led to a further seven fatalities, including a Lebanese soldier, and more than 48 casualties. The third round of clashes began on 20 February and continued intermittently for six weeks, leaving at least 30 people dead, including 2 Lebanese soldiers, and more than 100 injured. The fighting was halted on 27 March when the Government approved its new security plan for the city.

24. Such violent incidents are a reflection of the widespread proliferation of weapons held by non-State actors and the significant threat that such weapons pose to national peace and security. Efforts to increase the capabilities of the armed forces and their ability to tackle multiple challenges, including internal security, continued, such as the Government's security plan for Tripoli, which was agreed upon on 27 March. The implementation of the plan led to the arrest of dozens of fighters and gang leaders from both the Sunni and Alawite communities and the dismantling of firing positions and checkpoints established by the militias. During raids carried out as part of the plan, quantities of weapons and ammunition were seized. Similar raids were carried out by the armed forces in the predominantly Shia area of the Bekaa, where Syrian and Lebanese armed men were arrested and illegal weapons confiscated.

25. The armed forces also made progress in efforts to prevent terrorist attacks and disrupt terrorist networks, making arrests and discovering and defusing car bombs. On 30 December, Lebanese media reported the arrest of Majed al-Majed, the commander of the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, which had claimed responsibility for the bombing of the Iranian Embassy. Reportedly seriously ill, he died in custody on 4 January. Other militants from the Abdullah Azzam Brigades were arrested and charged by military prosecutors with membership of the organization. On 22 January, a Sunni militant wanted in connection with terrorist attacks in Lebanon, Omar Atrash, was arrested, as were Naim Abbas (on 12 February) and Sami al-Atrash (on 27 March). All were reportedly leaders of the Abdullah Azzam Brigades. The armed forces discovered and defused car bombs in the Bekaa on 22 November, Zahle on 29 November, Beirut on 12 February and Baalbek on 17 March.

26. The situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remained generally stable, notwithstanding the incidents detailed in my most recent report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2014/130). In my next report on that subject, I will provide details on subsequent incidents, including the explosion of an improvised explosive device on 14 March south of the Blue Line and subsequent firing by the Israeli armed forces into southern Lebanon, the UNIFIL investigation into which is continuing.

27. In a letter dated 27 February (A/68/776-S/2014/134), the Lebanese authorities said that on 24 February Israeli military aircraft had violated Lebanese airspace, raiding the outskirts of Janta town and firing several missiles within Lebanese

territory, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). In an interview on 7 April, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah claimed responsibility for the aforementioned incident of 14 March south of the Blue Line against an Israeli patrol, committed allegedly in retaliation for the Janta incident. In a letter dated 9 April (S/2014/254), the Israeli authorities, with reference to the claim by Hizbullah of responsibility, drew attention to the incident of 14 March as a severe violation of resolution 1701 (2006). In a letter dated 14 April (A/68/848-S/2014/278), the Lebanese authorities informed me of several shells fired by Israel on 14 March that had struck locations on Lebanese territory in violation of resolution 1701 (2006).

28. With regard to the border of Lebanon with the Syrian Arab Republic there continued to be reports of arms trafficking taking place in both directions. Several Member States continued to express deep concern over the illegal transfer of weapons across the land borders. Israeli officials stated that they would act to prevent advanced weapons systems from being transferred to Hizbullah from the Syrian Arab Republic. Senior representatives of Hizbullah, for their part, maintained their position that they had no intention of acquiring chemical weapons. The Lebanese authorities indicated that the land border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic remained difficult to control, but that the Lebanese armed forces had been deployed and were seeking to tighten control along the border to the best of their ability. While the United Nations has no independent means of verifying reports of cross-border arms smuggling, I have repeatedly expressed my concerns about the risks to both countries.

29. To tackle continuing cross-border incidents and in the context of reports of arms smuggling, there remains an urgent need to improve the management and control of the land borders of Lebanon. This is also necessary to prevent armed groups and militias in Lebanon from expanding their weapons arsenals, given that such expansion constitutes a threat to national and regional peace. Donor coordination with the authorities on integrated border management is under way. I reiterate my calls upon all Member States to renew efforts to meet their obligations under Security Council resolutions to take the measures necessary to prevent the transfer of arms to groups outside the control of the Government of Lebanon.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

30. In its resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council called for the disarming and disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. This remains a key provision of the resolution that has not yet been implemented. It reflects and reaffirms a decision to which all Lebanese committed themselves in the Taif Agreement, which led at the time to Lebanese militias, with the exception of Hizbullah, giving up their weapons. Given the current national context of increased sectarian tensions and the growing impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon, it is critical that this agreement be preserved and implemented by all in order to avoid the spectre of a renewed confrontation among the Lebanese.

31. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias within the country continue to operate outside the control of the Government, in serious violation of resolution 1559 (2004). While several groups across the political spectrum in Lebanon possess weapons outside government control, the armed component of Hizbullah is the most

significant and most heavily armed Lebanese militia in the country. On 4 December, a Hizbullah commander, Hassan Laqis, was assassinated in Beirut. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups poses a serious challenge to the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. In addition, a number of Palestinian armed groups continue to operate in the country inside and outside the refugee camps. Furthermore, there continued to be reports in recent months of infiltration or presence of extremist elements in Lebanon. Tackling this issue has become all the more urgent in the current difficult circumstances. The extent of violence and terrorist acts during the reporting period cost many lives and caused great suffering to many innocent Lebanese, affecting communities throughout Lebanon.

32. During the reporting period, there was yet again no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, as called for in the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). Since the adoption of that resolution, no specific steps have been taken to tackle this crucial issue, which lies at the heart of the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. Several Lebanese groups and individuals continue to speak up against the maintenance by Hizbullah of a military arsenal, which they consider a destabilizing factor in the country and contradictory to democracy. Many Lebanese see the continued existence of such arms as an implicit threat for use within Lebanon for political reasons.

33. I have repeatedly expressed my deep concern to Lebanese leaders about the serious risks that armed groups pose to the stability of the country and the region. I have urged them to tackle this matter without further delay, given that it is their obligation under resolution 1559 (2004). In a democratic State, it is a fundamental anomaly that a political party maintains its own militia. Nonetheless, Hizbullah has continued to acknowledge openly that it maintains and expands a substantial military capacity separate from that of the Lebanese State. It further claims that its arms serve as a deterrent against potential aggression from Israel. Israeli officials continued to express concern at the alleged maintenance by Hizbullah of unauthorized weapons or the presence of armed personnel in civilian areas in the south of Lebanon.

34. I have long supported the National Dialogue as the best way to deal with the issue of arms and achieve the ultimate goal of no weapons or armed forces in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State. A National Dialogue session was held on 31 March under the leadership of the President of Lebanon. All the main Lebanese political groups participated, with the exception of Hizbullah and the Lebanese Forces. During the session, the President reintroduced his plan, originally set out in September 2012, for a national defence strategy, highlighting the importance of implementing the Baabda Declaration and meeting constitutional deadlines, including that for the presidential election. The Government committed itself to resuming debate on the national defence strategy, the importance of which had been underlined by the President on 23 March. The next session is scheduled for 5 May.

35. During the reporting period, the security situation in the Palestine refugee camps remained generally stable, with the exception of a few violent incidents. The Ein el-Hillweh camp and the neighbouring area of Taamir were used as a refuge by militant Sunni elements, allegedly including fugitive Ahmed Assir. On 1 December, militants from the Jund al-Sham group killed a member of Fatah and injured two

others. In continuing violence over the next two days, two more people were injured. On 25 December, a car bomb exploded in Ein el-Hillweh, without causing casualties. On 1 February, an individual with links to Fatah was killed by two unidentified gunmen in Ein el-Hillweh. On 8 April, clashes erupted in the Mieh Mieh camp, close to Sidon, leaving at least seven people dead and at least seven injured. On 28 November, the Prime Minister of the State of Palestine, Rami Hamdallah, reiterated that it was important for Palestinians in Lebanon to safeguard security and stability there.

36. Humanitarian conditions for Palestine refugees in Lebanon remain dire, with the influx of an additional 52,977 refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic since the beginning of the crisis placing tremendous further pressure on the overall situation in the camps, in addition to the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to provide assistance. Tensions are also increasing between the Palestine refugees who have been residing in Lebanon and those arriving from the Syrian Arab Republic, given that the latter are deemed to be placing an additional burden on the already limited resources available for Palestine refugees. The United Nations has continued to urge the Lebanese authorities to improve the living conditions of the refugees. This should be done without prejudice to the eventual resolution of the Palestine refugee question in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement in the region, and bearing in mind the detrimental effects of dismal living conditions on the wider security situation.

37. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps continues to challenge the ability of Lebanon to exercise full sovereignty over its territory. Notwithstanding the decision taken in 2006 by the National Dialogue and confirmed in subsequent sessions, no progress was made during the reporting period with regard to dismantling the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada in the country. All but one of those bases are located along the Syrian-Lebanese border. Their presence continues to undermine Lebanese sovereignty and governmental authority and makes delineation of the border more difficult. It poses a serious challenge to the effective control of the eastern border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. I have reiterated my calls upon the Lebanese authorities for the implementation of earlier decisions of the National Dialogue, specifically those relating to the dismantling of the above-mentioned military bases, and upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with those efforts in good faith.

III. Observations

38. I welcome the positive political developments in Lebanon, including the formation of a new government of national interest under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Tamam Salam, and its commitment to international obligations, including issues relevant to resolution 1559 (2004). The unity that led to the formation of the Government after a protracted period of 11 months should be built upon in order to better protect the security, stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. In particular, it will be important for confidence to build on the initial gains made in tackling immediate security threats. I am encouraged by the resumption of the National Dialogue sessions and hope that within this Lebanese-led process further progress can be made on developing a national defence strategy. Continued political unity will remain important in furthering these positive steps

and in continuing to empower the armed and security forces to tackle the difficult security challenges ahead.

39. I remain disappointed, however, at the lack of further tangible progress towards the implementation of the remaining provisions of resolution 1559 (2004). Lebanon continues to face serious challenges to its stability and security, both internally and along its borders with the Syrian Arab Republic, including from arms smuggling and from further influxes of refugees. I am also concerned that continued stagnation in the implementation of the resolution could lead to the erosion of provisions already implemented and contribute to further deterioration in the stability of Lebanon. I reiterate my firm conviction that it is in the best interest of Lebanon and the Lebanese to make progress towards the full implementation of the resolution for the long-term stability of the country and the region.

40. Recent incidents along the Blue Line, as detailed in my reports on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), underscore the fragility of the situation there. I commend the Lebanese and Israeli armed forces for their efforts to reduce tensions and for the support and coordination of UNIFIL in this regard.

41. I have repeatedly condemned the continued violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon, including the many incidents in which civilians have been killed or injured on the Lebanese side of the border because of the actions of warring parties in the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular in the context of the recent fighting around the Syrian towns of Yabrud and Hosn. I continue to call upon all parties, including the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, in accordance with resolution 1559 (2004).

42. The escalation of violence in Lebanon during the reporting period is deeply worrying, including multiple terrorist incidents carried out by groups claiming that they are acting in response to the involvement of Hizbullah in the fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic. I remain deeply concerned by the failure of various parties to cease involvement in that fighting and in particular the continued acknowledgement by Hizbullah of its role therein. The involvement by some Lebanese groups in the conflict has had a devastating impact on security and stability in Lebanon. I call upon all in the region to respond to my calls to stop the transfer of arms and fighters from Lebanon to the Syrian Arab Republic and for the full respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. This surge in violence and terrorism highlights that there is a continued need to uphold the principles of the Baabda Declaration and the policy of disassociation and for Lebanese parties to step back from their involvement in the Syrian Arab Republic. I welcome the Government's clear commitment in this regard and encourage all parties in Lebanon to respect and fulfil the obligations upon which they have all agreed.

43. The return of political assassination in the form of the bombing that targeted Mohamad Chatah was a disturbing and worrying reminder of earlier crimes in Lebanon. The opening of the trial in the Special Tribunal for Lebanon on 16 January was a strong signal of the refusal of Lebanon and the international community to bend to terror or impunity.

44. I am encouraged by the resumption of the National Dialogue under the leadership of the President and have long believed that the best way to tackle violence in the country is to disarm militias through a Lebanese-led process. The discussion of the President's 2012 vision for developing a national defence strategy

at the session on 31 March was a welcome step in this regard that needs to be built on. I urge all parties to engage in the National Dialogue and to implement earlier decisions taken in that context, specifically those relating to the disarmament of non-Lebanese groups and the dismantling of Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada military bases. The Syrian conflict should not be used as an excuse to ignore those responsibilities, but as a clear reminder of the need to disarm and disband militias.

45. I have repeatedly cautioned that the widespread proliferation of weapons outside the control of the State, combined with the continued existence of heavily armed militias, undermines the security of Lebanese citizens. The maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable and sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government remains a matter of grave concern, in particular because it creates an atmosphere of intimidation and represents a key challenge to the safety of Lebanese civilians and to the government monopoly on the legitimate use of force. It also puts Lebanon in violation of its obligations under resolution 1559 (2004) and constitutes a threat to regional peace and stability. I reiterate my call upon Hizbullah and all other parties concerned not to engage in any militant activity inside or outside Lebanon, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004).

46. I continue to urge the Government and armed forces of Lebanon to take all measures necessary to prohibit Hizbullah from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacities outside the authority of the State, in violation of resolution 1559 (2004). I also call upon countries in the region that maintain close ties with Hizbullah to encourage the transformation of the armed group into a solely political party and its disarmament, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004), in the best interest of Lebanon and regional peace and security.

47. I am deeply concerned by the situation of Palestine refugees in the camps and the additional pressure being placed on the limited resources available in the light of the presence of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic who have fled violence there. I reiterate my call upon donors to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its vital work in providing services to Palestine refugees in Lebanon. Strong cooperation between the Lebanese authorities and the Palestinian security forces in the camps has been crucial in ensuring that security incidents are brought under control swiftly. I welcome the continued commitment of the Palestinian leadership to ensuring security and stability in Lebanon.

48. I regret the absence of any progress on the delineation and demarcation of the border with the Syrian Arab Republic, which has a significant impact on border control. I remain of the view that integrated border management will, in the longer term, contribute significantly to better control of the borders of Lebanon and help to prevent the illegal transfer of weapons and fighters in both directions. This has become even more pressing in the context of events in the Syrian Arab Republic. I call upon donors to continue to support border management.

49. The continued violations by Israel of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, most conspicuously the overflights of Lebanese territory by Israeli aircraft, are deplorable. I reiterate my call upon Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and to withdraw its forces from the

northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, as well as to cease its overflights of Lebanese airspace, which undermine the credibility of the Lebanese security services and generate anxiety among the civilian population. They also greatly increase the risk of unintended consequences in a very tense regional context.

50. I warmly welcome the formation of a national interest government after many months of political stagnation. I am encouraged by the Government's commitment to the policy of disassociation, the National Dialogue, the implementation of earlier decisions taken at the National Dialogue sessions and respect for Security Council resolutions pertaining to Lebanon, as referred to in the ministerial statement of 20 March.

51. I also welcome the priority given in the statement to holding the presidential election on time on the basis of constitutional procedures and democratic practice. Holding that election in a free and fair environment, in the spirit of resolution 1559 (2004), is a key element in preserving democratic institutions and processes and will contribute to the renewed spirit of cooperation and respect for coexistence that has been increasing. The security of Lebanon must prevail, as must national peace, without intimidation by armed groups. The maintenance of weapons by armed groups, including Hizbullah, outside State control is in contradiction to the Taif Agreement and incompatible with the imperative of free and fair elections.

52. I commend the efforts of the armed forces to confront multiple security challenges throughout the country. They have made progress in tackling various security challenges, including terrorist threats and the situation in Tripoli. Despite suffering losses, they have deployed robustly in all conflict-affected areas. The implementation of a new security plan in Tripoli and the Bekaa appears to have produced positive results to date and has been broadly welcomed by leaders and local communities. For the army to continue to build on those successes, given its overstretched capacity, it is crucial for it to continue to receive support from all Lebanese leaders. The emphasis placed thereon by the Prime Minister and his Government is encouraging and should be built upon further, including in the context of the International Support Group for Lebanon and its support for the five-year development plan of the armed forces. I encourage all stakeholders, including international donors and the Government, to continue to be forthcoming in the support for the plan and the army. I also pay tribute to the former Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, for his strong leadership during a particularly difficult period.

53. I remain firmly committed to the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) for the sake of peace and security during a particularly difficult and challenging time in Lebanon. I therefore count on the continued commitment of the Government to its international obligations and call upon all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). I further call upon Member States to renew efforts to support Lebanon in ensuring respect for its obligations under those resolutions, as the best way to advance the country's long-term prosperity and stability as a democratic State. I will continue my efforts towards the full implementation of those and all other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.